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INTERIOR DEPARTMENT SENDS EAGLE FEATHERS TO INDIAN TRIBES

Since adopting the suggestion by Mr. Merovka, the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center has salvaged feathers from about twenty eagles, primarily from North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Missouri.

Both varieties of eagles--the golden and the bald--are represented in the feather collection. Golden eagle feathers are brown, with a golden tinge on head and shoulder feathers. The smaller bald eagle, darker with white head and shoulder feathers, is the majestic bird which is the American national emblem, whose image is imprinted on coins. Both are masters of the air currents and soar on motionless wings that have a span up to 7½ feet.

At the Wildlife Research Center only the larger, undamaged wing and tail feathers are recovered for use by the Indians. Since the supply is limited, only the most pressing needs of the Indians can be met at this time.

Federal laws safeguard eagles, their feathers, nests, and eggs. None of these may be possessed without a permit from the Secretary of the Interior unless acquired before protective laws were passed. The bald eagle has been protected by Federal law since 1940, and an amendment in October 1962 covered the golden eagle. The Secretary of the Interior can issue possession permits to public museums, scientific associations, and zoological parks for scientific or exhibition purposes only, or to individual Indians for religious purposes.

No eagles or their feathers, nests, or eggs can be transferred to another person except by permit, but Indians may hand them down from generation to generation by tribal or religious custom.

Feathers obtained from the Fish and Wildlife Service under the present arrangement cannot be employed in manufacturing articles for sale, nor can the feathers themselves be sold.

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